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BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING
PROGRAMME IN A LOCAL BAPTIST CHURCH

AN ESSAY PRESENTED

TO

THE FACULTY OF THE
NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE AWARD
OF MASTER OF DIVINITY DEGREE

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JUNE, 1995

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ABSTRACT

The present day Church is characterized by members who indeed have given their lives to Christ but not growing in the faith. As a result many remain babes in Christ. This made the church to be full of uncommitted and ungodly members who do not care about patterning their lives after that of Christ. The major reason for this situation is that these members are not disciplined after giving their lives to Christ. It is this situation that led the writer into this work, using Calvary Baptist Church, Jos to illustrate the work.

In Chapter One the purpose, scope and methodology of the research were examined. Key terms used in the paper were defined and brief history of Calvary Baptist Church, Jos given.

Chapter Two deals with discipleship training in the Bible, including its theological and Biblical bases and its principles as carried out by Jesus Christ and apostle Paul.

In Chapter Three discipleship training was examined in the context of Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Chapter ended with a full account of discipleship training at Calvary Baptist Church, Jos.

The writer in Chapter Four examined certain things essential in building an effective Discipleship Training Programme in a local church.

Chapter Five deals with the likely impacts of the training on individual participants and the local church carrying it out. This includes personal testimonies of people who have been involved in the programme. The Paper concludes with a challenge to every believer and local church to be involved in discipleship training.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Discipleship is the core of the Great Commission as given by Jesus Christ. Unbelievers need someone to preach to them and when they accept Christ someone needs to help them be Christlike in ministry and lifestyle. This is what Discipleship Training Programme does. It is discovered in this research work that Discipleship Training Programme is rooted in the Bible. It first of all, has its basis in the Great Commission, then Paul's teaching on the need to equip saints to be involved in Christ's ministry (Eph. 4: 11-13; 2 Tim. 2: 2). Jesus further made some statements on absolute nature of discipleship. Discipleship Training also has theological basis demonstrated in the supreme worth of every individual, the nature and essence of the Christian life, and the demands of the Church as a spiritual democracy. Above all the ministries of Jesus and Paul serve as good examples of discipleship training ministry.

As a result of biblical foundation of discipleship training, it is then a programme every local Baptist Church should be involved in. This is because of its multiplication effect and the way it provides commitment to the ministry of the church and enhances fellowship among its members. Although almost all Baptist Churches in Nigeria are involved

in Discipleship or Church Training Programme, most of their involvements are not total. This is evidenced in the way these churches only concentrate on using dated resources not caring about relevance of undated resources to the needs of the church members. Church Training Programme in Baptist Churches should not be limited to the use of dated resources alone, especially at the expense of undated resources. Combination of the two types of resources depending on the needs of the members provides total and balanced discipleship training in the Church. This is the only way the Church can effectively carry out the sixfold tasks of discipleship training in its entirety.

Many Churches are lagging behind in discipleship training because their Pastors are ignorant of the programme and its resources. Therefore, Pastors and other Church leaders need to familiarise themselves more with materials available for discipleship training in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, especially in the course of their pastoral training. There is thus the need for our seminaries and Bible Colleges to include indepth study *discipleship training in* of the Nigerian Baptist Convention context in their ^{NAA} curriculum.

Discipleship training not only help the church to grow but also has great impacts on spiritual lives of individual participants. It is found out in this research work that discipleship training produces

consistency in the spiritual growth, develops personal ministry skills, godly ethical standards and strong doctrinal foundation and denominational understanding in the participant. It also helps him/her discover and use his/her spiritual gifts and equally turns him/her to be a discipler. Therefore, it is a programme every christian who wishes to grow in his/her relationship with the Lord must be partaker of. This will make him/her not to be a babe in Christ but mature person.

However, Discipleship Training Programme is full of challenges and difficulties. The greatest challenge being those of time and finance. Most of the courses require spending some hours in preparation and group meetings. It will also cost the church and/or individual participant certain amount of money to purchase materials. In order to encourage the disciples it is advisable for the church to be responsible for purchase of materials at the initial stage of the programme. The participants should not allow the above challenge to discourage them, rather the money and time committed to it should be seen as life investment which will yield dividends as disciples become more and more Christlike. Another challenge is that many people may not be interested at the initial stage of the programme. This should not prevent the discipler(s) to go on with the programme and he/she/they must not attempt to force it on anyone. As others see the impacts of the

programme on the participants, they will be interested. For Discipleship Training Programme to produce desired results it requires commitment, endurance, patience and trust in God.

Finally, to start Discipleship Training Programme in a local church is not enough but the organisers should endeavour to make it effective. To do this the programme should be well planned, given good leadership, well promoted and evaluated. Such a well organised Discipleship Training Programme backed up with prayer can change lives and church full of immorality, stunt growth and indifference to the things of God to lives and church full of moralities, rapid growth and zeal towards God's work. It is only through such a life and church changing programme that twentieth century church can reclaim the lost vision of the Great Commission in its entirety.